

GPR

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INSIDE

Vol III.

GEORGIA POLITICAL REVIEW

*THE POLITICS OF:
ISRAEL, LIBYA, RUSSIA, ATHENS,
THE UNITED STATES, AND HIGHER
EDUCATION*



*more
years?*

THE INFORMED
STUDENT'S
GUIDE TO
ELECTION 2012

FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

This fall marks an exciting time for GPR's staff, as general election season is America's favorite time to be political. In the year since publication of our first print edition, GPR has accomplished much, from doubling the size of our staff, quadrupling our circulation, updating our website on a daily basis, covering the student government elections, to interviewing nationally celebrated political figures, like Noam Chomsky and Clarence Thomas. We were stunned and honored when BBC and AJC requested our editor's commentary. Currently, we are in the midst of sponsoring a program, Cross-Aisle Conversations, to promote debate between political organizations and fellow students.

GPR seeks to be the most interactive political review in the nation. Reports and analysis are helpful tools, but in conversation we motivate ourselves and others to forward thinking. We aim to evoke an elevated discussion of politics, one beyond partisanship, because this is a place where progress can be made. This is the driving philosophy of our organization.

Our Campaign 2012 Special Issue features

extensive election coverage, including the candidates' platforms, foreign policy stances, economic anomalies, third party concerns, education policy and more. Should we re-elect Obama or give Mitt Romney a chance? What about Gary Johnson? Is he a legitimate contender? Our articles can answer your questions and clarify your decision. In a time of political gridlock and high polarization, GPR provides unbiased content that paints a clear picture of both sides of the story. While it's easy to forget about international politics during the Presidential election, we also cover the upcoming Olympics in Russia, the death of the Ethiopian Prime Minister, and questions about the war and its relations to human rights. Our culture section contemplates the political statements of the favorite TV show, *Parks and Recreation*, and the effectiveness of the sports luxury tax.

Our staff has enjoyed analyzing the campaign for the Oval Office so far, but there's still more to come! Stay tuned as we continue to live blog the debates and provide up-to-date critical commentaries of the presidential campaigns. After the results, be



Stephanie Talmadge

sure to check our website for post-election analysis at georgiapoliticalreview.com. "Like" us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter @gapolitical for daily updates!

Join the conversation, and, of course, don't forget to vote! (Sorry, we couldn't help ourselves.)

Sincerely,
Stephanie Talmadge

GPR The Georgia Political Review

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why we go to school.

“Promote, then, as an object of primary importance, institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened.”
George Washington

What is the purpose of higher education? If you've ever had the distinct pleasure of taking one of UGA's introductory economics courses, you may have been offered an answer: A college education, we are told, is an economic investment purchased by a consumer, the student, in hopes that the resulting increase in future earnings (or human capital, to use the appropriate jargon) will offset the initial costs of the investment. Whether or not this is followed by a patronizing illustration of the concept of scarcity (it usually is), the unsaid implication of this construction is that, absent the guarantee of high post-graduation income, no self-respecting homo economicus would ever set foot in a classroom.

Popular though this explanation may be, especially in the hallowed halls of Terry College of Business, it has only recently (since the 1970s) become dominant. There exists another explanation for why we should actually try to learn something other than the trendiest widget-producing technique or a throwaway General Ed requirement.

The British poet and intellectual Matthew Arnold famously stated that "to know ourselves and our world, we have, as a means to this end, to know the best that has been thought and said in the world." The same can be said for the traditional concept of education long favored by tweed-wearing academia. Though economic gain is undeniably important (and, increasingly, tied to a bachelor's degree), a high future income should never be the purpose of a good education, but merely a possible side-effect. Rather than a private commodity, education is viewed as a mix between a public and private good that benefits both the individual that receives it and society at large. Knowledge is to be pursued more or less for its own sake, with the idea that learning builds skills which will in turn provide students with the ability to function both as economically productive members of society and responsible citizens of a democratic nation. Says the Department of Philosophy's Dr. Edward Halper: "The purpose of higher education is to open students' minds to the possibility of lifelong learning, and of realizing what it means to be human."

A quick glance at the numbers might suggest that the former approach is eclipsing the latter. The University of Georgia conferred 6,846 Bachelor's degrees in 2011. Of these, 1,559, or 23%, were for "Business, Management, Marketing & Related Support Services." By comparison, 196 were conferred

for English Language & Literature, 158 for History, 55 for Philosophy/Religious Studies, and a paltry 41 for Mathematics and Statistics combined. Nationwide, business students make up around 1/5th of the undergraduate population. It is unlikely that most of these students have any burning desire to learn about the theory of the firm or basic accounting, but rather a burning desire to make the extra \$13,000 in starting salary that the median business major will take home over his liberal arts brethren.

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To sweeten the deal, it seems that the business student can secure these gains at the cost of much less effort than is generally expected of university students. According to the National Survey of Student Engagement, business majors spend the least time of students in any discipline on work outside the classroom. The Chronicle of Higher Education reported in 2011 that business students show minimal gains in critical thinking and writing skills over their college careers and post exceptionally poor scores on the GMAT when compared with almost any major. Business majors also regularly compete for the top spot on lists of students most likely to cheat.

The problem is not that business majors are stupid. "I teach students in Franklin and Terry, and I don't see any significant differences in test scores, grades, etc." says Dr. Jonathan Williams, a professor of Economics at UGA. "I think your median student in both departments is about the same." Rather, the University of Georgia, and others like it across the country, allows students to skate through school with only minimal

exposure to subjects outside their chosen discipline. The University only requires 6 hours of Humanities/Fine Arts (English, Comparative Literature, Philosophy, Religion, Music, Classics, Foreign Languages) and 12 hours of Social Sciences (History, Sociology, Anthropology, Economics). Combine the AP and IB credit many freshmen carry with the fact that classes like "History and Analysis of Rock Music" are deemed similarly worthy to "Introduction to Philosophy," and it is easy to see how a student can graduate with an extensive knowledge of supply chain management and an exceedingly dim understanding of the world. Without necessary prodding by the University, students acting in the vein of J.S. Mill's rationally self-interested man will be unlikely to do more than the bare minimum required to graduate, let alone actually read a book by Mill or anyone else.

All this is not to say that practical education has no place in American universities. High-tech industries (i.e. where the jobs are) often complain that the university system fails to produce enough qualified students to meet their needs. At a time when college costs and student debt are rising, students and parents are right to be concerned about Junior's job prospects after graduation. It would be ridiculous to suggest that everyone should major or minor in the liberal arts or social sciences. However, it is equally ridiculous to expect that training students in narrow professional categories in the midst of a rapidly changing economy will serve them better than a fundamental understanding of how to read, write, learn, and think. Furthermore, as a democratic society, if we don't equip our graduates with even the most basic knowledge of history, philosophy, and culture, then it stretches credulity to expect them to make informed decisions about self-government in the age of dark political money and ideological mass media.

"Everyone wants to take easy courses because people have the attitude of not wanting to work," says Dr. Halper. "But they don't realize what's on the table. College is just the next step in life, and students don't realize the potential of who they can be and what they can become." The American university system is still the best in the world, and a university education is, for many, a ticket to a high-paying job and a place in the middle class. But however intelligent we are as students, we are likely to follow the path of least resistance when it comes to earning our degrees. It is not the University's business to dictate what we study, but it has a responsibility to ensure that we leave school not only employable, but educated.

FORWARD

TO THE POLLS

with

NO APOLOGY



ARMS TRADE TREATY

Yulia Bila
Associate Editor

One of the most typical consequences of democracy is the greater degree of politicization in the decision-making process prior to critical elections. Decisions made during a political campaign are typically undertaken to garner support among the undecided electorate who are concerned with a particular policy. Bush, for example, allegedly pressured the Secretary of Homeland Security to raise the terror rating during his 2004 campaign, believing that a state of alert would increase his prospects of reelection. The Obama administration has been guilty of this political game as well; by now, most foreign affairs enthusiasts are well aware of the President's hot mike moment in March when discussing the future of missile defense with the outgoing Russian President, Dmitriy Medvedev.

A more recent example of this political maneuvering occurred at the end of the July when the US abandoned the proposed UN Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) that it had previously supported as a near panacea for improving international security. During the July treaty negotiations in New York, the US actively participated in trying to reach an agreement on the language of the ATT amid concerns that states such as Syria, North Korea and Iran would deflect and undermine years of negotiations. However, it was the US that ultimately withdrew support on the last day of the conference—thereby killing the treaty—under heavy pressure from gun

rights lobbyists associated with the National Rifle Association (NRA).

The NRA took up its anti-ATT stance from the very beginning, despite the internationally accepted inclusion of a key clause that specifically prohibited the treaty's regulation of domestic gun sales or ownership. The treaty was widely understood to only concern international arms transfers, yet the NRA still fueled a massive campaign on the basis of the misleading rhetoric that the UN was going to "take away our guns."

Rather than colluding to invalidate the Second Amendment rights of millions of Americans, the UN delegations and scores of arms trade specialists aimed to create the first comprehensive and binding agreement regulating the global trade in conventional weapons. This necessary yet highly sensitive trade, often conducted in the grey or black markets, surprisingly faces fewer legal regulations than the trade in most other goods—such as bananas. The troubling irony that buying an AK-47 from a foreign dealer can be easier than importing a crate of harmless fruit has been exploited by arms manufacturers and military leaders alike. This reality has led to high-level corruption and the extensive proliferation of munitions across the most unstable and undemocratic parts of the world, fueling civil wars and human rights abuses while undermining development.

In light of the violent instability across many regions of the world, the ATT appeared like a sound first step in addressing the illegal small weapons proliferation that

helped to fuel conflict. However, the US delegation, led by Susan Rice, the Ambassador to the United Nations, decided at the last minute that it was uncertain of the treaty's merits. The US State Department released a statement citing a desire for more time to consider this "complex and critical issue" as the ostensible reason behind the withdrawal of US support for a treaty that it had previously considered to be of vital importance. However, the vast majority of those who participated in or closely followed the ATT negotiations can state with confidence that the American about-face on this issue was motivated by the NRA's incessant fear mongering. The Obama administration simply panicked when faced with the possibility of being associated with an unpopular, albeit erroneous rhetoric immediately preceding a presidential election.

The NRA and American gun rights activists may feel like they have won an important victory by forcing the federal government to back down on regulating international arms transfers. Unfortunately, only corrupt businessmen, crooked politicians and illicit arms traffickers around the world, not the average American gun owner, have benefitted from the failure of the UN delegation to agree on a strong Arms Trade Treaty. They will continue enriching their wallets, fueling human rights abuses and evading lackluster national laws until the leaders of this country muster up enough courage to address the difficult issues rather than indulging the misinformed fancies of powerful special interests.



Education Reform in the United States

Emily Fountain and Jackson Garner
Associate Editors

During his presidency, Lyndon Johnson famously said, "I know education is the only passport from poverty." After World War II, reforming education became a hot button issue among not only political candidates, but to society as well. It remains a heated issue today - and for good reason. The United States ranks near the bottom of academic achievement in subjects such as reading, math and science, compared to other similar countries. In order for America to sustain its prosperity, the dire state of our education system will need to undergo significant changes. And though the 2012 election raises many issues, the policies that both President Obama and Republican Candidate Mitt Romney support cannot afford to be overshadowed.

Since taking office in 2008, President Obama has initiated what Republicans and Democrats alike deem an aggressive yet alluring approach to education reform. In response to the rapidly unpopular No Child

Left Behind Act, President Obama enacted a waiver system that has allowed 32 states and the District of Columbia to exempt testing requirements specified under NCLB, provided that states comply to the Administration's policies. Furthermore, in July of 2009, the President announced a competitive solution to the achievement gap, a program entitled Race to the Top. Under this initiative, schools would compete for grants garnered from a 4.3 billion dollar stimulus designated for educational funding. In order to be eligible to receive these funds, states adhere to policies promoted by the administration including, but not limited to: common standards for 45 states as well as the District of Columbia, advocating on behalf of charter schools, and teacher evaluations based on student test performance. These measures comprise some of the President's most targeted education aims. Race for the Top has now awarded grants to 18 states and D.C., though over half of the states have tried.

Race to the Top employs accountability and promotes progress in education by re-

“WITH BOTH MEN ADVOCATING THE BASIC FRAMEWORK OF NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND, THEY DISAGREE ONLY ON THE DEGREE OF CHANGE.”

quiring states to compete for funding. Though as a market concept this idea seems promising, its success has yet to be empirically verified, and there are many potential pitfalls to the President's policies. For instance, by pushing for the expansion of charter schools, public institutions could be severely defunded. Additionally, high-stakes testing has led to backlash from teacher's unions. Moreover, critics have claimed that Race to the Top is too expensive and not worth the amount of funding it requires. The program uses less than 1 percent of a 500 billion dollar bill prescribed for elementary and high school education, yet its reach and impact extends far beyond its price tag. Despite this, the President's initiatives have been supported by the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association.

Republican nominee Mitt Romney has leapt to the center since his venture into politics in 1994 on the subject of education. During his Senate campaign in 1994, he advocated abolishing the Department of Education. As far-fetched as that idea is today, it was not then. Many Republicans wanted to abandon it, as it was in the GOP Party Platform until George W. Bush ran in 2000. However, Romney has reversed his position and now supports the Department of Education and its goals.

Recently, the term accountability has found in its way into Romney's vocabulary when referring to education. Accountability, as he sees it, is best measured through standardized testing. Romney has stated,

then and now, that he supports standardized testing, which he views as the best way to measure student and teacher performance. With that said, he supports the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind in order to gauge the progress of both educators and their students. Even though Romney supports federal involvement on some levels, he still believes institutions at the micro level, like communities and state agencies, provide the most effective education policy. Reform at the local level includes charter schools, vouchers, and school-choice. Romney, along with the majority of his Republican colleagues, supports these measures as some of the best means to spark innovation and let the market produce results. He believes that options produce competition for the public school system and more choices for parents to remove their child from a struggling school district.

Education provides perhaps the strongest link and commonalities between the candidates. With both men advocating a standards-based testing system, a push for charter schools, and the basic framework of No Child Left Behind, they disagree only on the degree of change. While Obama fully backs Race to the Top, which some have called No Child Left Behind on steroids, Romney advocates reauthorization of the original initiative. Furthermore, as Obama promotes the idea of common standards, an idea first proposed by the Clinton administration, Republicans and Romney believe that this type of federal regulation is intrusive and

a clear example of overreach. Despite the varying degrees, the two candidates' policies share far more similarities than differences, which may prove a problem.

In September, the Chicago Teachers Strike directed national attention to education policy. As teachers went on strike for seven days, the world was left wondering how our system could have gone so wrong, how teachers would be willing to sacrifice the short-term well-being of students for the long-term benefits of reform. The strike exposed policy flaws including merit pay and teacher evaluations based off standards-based testing. And while it may seem reasonable to assume that Romney's selection would solve this problem, that would be premature. Obama and Romney each champion this type of system, yet the strike in Chicago clearly illustrated that the system is not working and perhaps the policies they advocate are not the answers.

Just under fifty years later, Lyndon Johnson's sentiments are being echoed by both candidates. Republicans and Democrats alike are aware and actively addressing the education gap. Obama and Romney agree on the potential for education to alleviate poverty, yet they fail to provide a sound solution backed by research as they discuss new ideas and initiatives. And as they continue theoretical discussion, the passport line grows longer with many kids who will leave before they ever receive the final product.



Hitting Too Close to Home

Andrew Jarnigan
Associate Editor

On a bright, sunny day in Yemen last September, a CIA Predator drone carried out a routine attack on a group of suspected terrorists. Killed in the strike were at least five senior al-Qaeda members, including Anwar al-Awlaki, a top member of al-Qaeda's affiliate in the Arabian Peninsula. Unlike his four associates, Al-Awlaki was an American citizen. The attack led to outrage from groups like the American Civil Liberties Union for its supposed wanton disregard for the Fifth Amendment right to due process. Despite widespread international disapproval (especially in the Arab world), the so-called "drone war," initiated under the Bush Administration and expanded under the Obama Administration, enjoys strong support both in Washington and on Main Street. Yet it raises many troubling questions about due process, executive power, and constitutional protections during wartime.

Despite the vaulted rhetoric regarding the civil liberties enjoyed by its citizens, the United States has a murky history of guaranteeing those rights in practice. Only 15 years after the American Revolution, the Alien and Sedition Acts granted President Adams the power to arrest and deport any foreigners suspected of endangering national security, and criminalized criticism of the U.S. government. Every subsequent war has brought its own flavor of restrictions to civil liberties. Lincoln suspended the writ of habeas corpus during the Civil War. World



Photo/U.S. Air Force

War I brought the Espionage Act, which criminalized criticism of the federal government. The Cold War gave rise to McCarthyism through the Smith Act. And finally, the War on Terror has led to the Patriot Act and Guantanamo Bay. Randolph Bourne, a 20th century essayist, claimed that war is the health of the state. It is certainly not the health of constitutional rights.

History has shown that every war violates civil liberties. Today's "War on Terror," a war with vague goals and no clear conditions of victory, reinforces the story. The Bush administration drafted an impressively non-specific list of objectives, including less than concrete tasks like, "persuade reluctant states" and "win the war of ideals." President Obama has followed in these footsteps, in rhetoric and in practice. There is no end in sight to a war like this, and no indicator of what the end would look like. We are fighting an endless war, and the implications of perpetual fighting as an official foreign policy are startling.

Though the doctrine of perpetual war has risen to prominence primarily in conjunction with the War on Terror, the idea and its consequences are nothing new. James Madison argued, "No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare."

The American people may have not yet felt the consequences of perpetual war, but the precedent establishes is hardly innocuous. This theory of conflict combined with a new breed of encroachment on civil liberties creates a frightening mix.

The Obama administration has released five criteria for authorizing the deployment of drones: the target must be authorized by American laws, any threat must be serious, not speculative, capture of the target must be infeasible, civilian casualties must be avoided at all costs, legal justification and due process are fulfilled for any American targeted. The fifth criterion, while hardly unreasonable, is controversial in practice. The government states that the constitutional right to due process, traditionally guaranteed by the legal system, is instead being fulfilled by the executive branch. The current administration claims that the legal justification is satisfactory, but refuses to release the documents to the public. "The President and his underlings," writes Glenn Greenwald, an outspoken opponent of the program, "are your accuser, your judge, your jury, and your executioner all wrapped up in one, acting in total secrecy." The alarming aspect of execution by the executive branch is the disregard

for judicial due process: a new frontier in the government's wartime restrictions of liberty. It does not simply follow an established precedent for a more pragmatic approach to conducting warfare in the modern world. Past restrictions on liberty during war were openly supported by all three branches of the government and legislated by Congress, thereby maintaining constitutional checks and balances if not the rights such checks were designed to protect. Executive due process mocks this tradition.

The problem is not that Anwar al-Awlaki was killed by U.S. forces; his guilt is universally recognized. The problem is that a precedent has been set, allowing individual execution of American citizens without trial, without charges or evidence, and without involvement of the judicial system, a system created to guarantee a fair and public prosecution. History has shown that governments are unlikely to relinquish power they have obtained. The power to eliminate its own citizens has been taken with hardly a whisper of opposition. What power is greater than that? Before deciding to spread "freedom" to another far-away country, perhaps we should consider the meaning of the word in our own homeland.

As the economy crawls ahead and Romney lags behind, the question that begs to be asked:

What now?

Andrew Roberts
Associate Editor

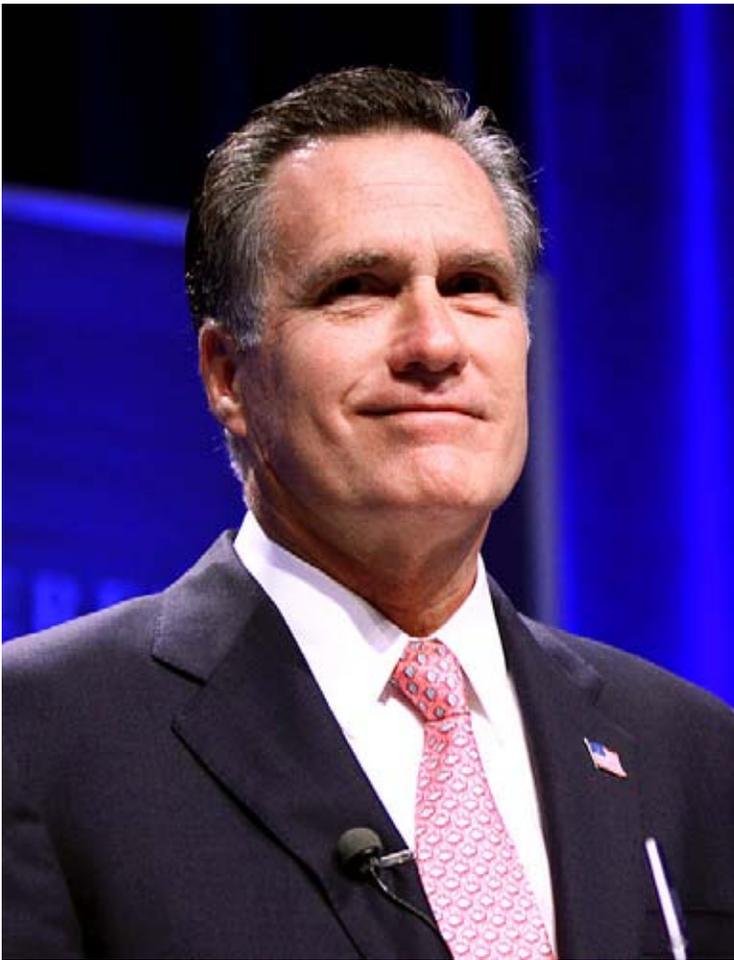
If the economy crashed on November 5, 2012, President Obama would surely lose the election the next day. Voters have been historically hyper-critical of presidents during economic downturns; Jimmy Carter lost his reelection in 1980 with 7.5% unemployment, and George H. W. Bush was hammered by Bill Clinton with 7.4% unemployment in 1992. Since FDR, the only time two-term president handed his position to someone of the same party was between Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush, when the economy was operating with 5.4% unemployment. Although many economists agree that the Great Reces-

sion is in recovery, the economic situation in the United States is still bleak.

Unemployment in August remained high at 8.1% and the actual number of jobs added was much fewer than anticipated. Possibly more important, however, is the 17% of Americans that find themselves underemployed. Recent gross domestic product (GDP) only increased by 1.7% in the second quarter of 2012, while gas price averages have threatened to surpass \$4.00 per gallon all summer. These economic indicators, as well as a national debt of \$16 trillion and counting, are far from the signs of an efficient economy. Unemployment is too high – the Bureau of Labor Statistics considers 4-6% unemployment to be ideal. This low level of unemploy-

ment allows for frictional unemployment, or the accepted amount of unemployment for a healthy economy when a person is moving from one job to another. As for GDP growth, the Bureau of Economic Analysis states that long-term growth should be 3-5%, large enough to continue economic development but small enough as to keep inflation low and stable.

Such a predicament begs an important question: as the economy performs below efficient standards and voters increasingly grow frustrated (according to Gallup, 53% of Americans think the economy is getting worse), how is Mitt Romney not already measuring his White House curtains? Critical swing states such as Nevada and Florida have



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unemployment rates higher than the national average (12.2%, the highest in the US, and 8.8%, respectively), and yet the Real Clear Politics polling averages have Obama beating Romney by a few points in both states. Although 65% of Americans surveyed by Gallup thought that economics issues are the nation's "most important problem," it doesn't seem they are blaming Obama for this setback.

If the blame doesn't lie with Obama, then it is clear that many still resent his predecessor. In a July CBS/New York Times poll, 64% of Americans attributed the slow economic growth to Obama's policies. In the same survey, however, 81% of voters also blamed George W. Bush for the financial situation. Romney has been very careful to avoid embracing any of Bush's policies, and yet he is still linked to his administration based on party alone.

Voters are possibly cutting the president some slack because of what the economy might have been without federal economic support. In a May 2012 study, "Gauging the Benefits, Costs, and Sustainability of U.S. Stimulus," Fitch Ratings and Oxford Economics found that actions by the Federal Reserve and the congressional stimulus package likely helped preserve and grow the economy. The study also claimed that the government's fiscal and monetary policies reversed potentially

deep negative GDP growth with 3.0% and 1.7% growth in 2010 and 2011. The study indicates that without federal stimulus, the United States would still be in deep recession. Dr. Austan Goolsbee, professor of economics at University of Chicago's Booth School of Business and former Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors, agreed with the study. When asked in an e-mail interview if Americans were better off than they were four years ago, Goolsbee replied that "no one in their right mind would trade places with where we were in January 2009." He also made the case that without federal economic support, "we would be in another depression."

The Obama campaign's criticism of Mitt Romney, notably his work at Bain Capital and as governor of Massachusetts, has likely made victory for the former governor even more difficult. The President's campaign has argued that Mitt Romney outsourced jobs and closed functioning plants and factories to make them more efficient, a claim based on a June article from The Washington Post. The article states that under Romney, Bain "owned companies that were pioneers in the practice of shipping work from the United States to overseas." Although there are clear economic benefits to outsourcing for a CEO, it is something Romney has ironically criticized, saying, "If I'm

President of the United States, [outsourcing]'s going to end." Stephanie Cutter, deputy campaign manager at Obama for America, argues that as governor, Massachusetts fell to 47th of 50 states in job creation. These assertions by the Obama campaign, despite disputes and claims of falsehood from the right, have greatly affected the way voters perceive Mitt Romney and how they believe he would handle the economy.

There are other possible reasons, of course, why Romney is not winning handily. Obama leads among key voting blocs like women and Latinos, likely because of his support for reproductive rights and immigration reform. Those issues aside, it only seems reasonable for this election to be decided on the economy. Most voters see the economy as the most important problem, and many do not have a positive economic outlook or think Barack Obama is the answer. That being said, they clearly do not think Mitt Romney is the better choice either. Many Americans see the potentially catastrophic economy we had four years ago and realize that although our position is not ideal, it could be substantially worse. "Avoiding the collapse of the financial system and the economy," Dr. Goolsbee says, "will be looked back on by historians as a major achievement, regardless of whether it matters for the election or not."

ISRAEL IN THE UPCOMING ELECTION

Alex Sileo and Paula Baroff
Associate Editors

Although the 2012 presidential election has primarily focused on the state of the economy, each campaign is still recognizing the importance of highlighting its foreign policy goals. In particular, the United States' relationship with Israel has been a major focal point of the ongoing foreign policy debate during this campaign season due to the recent attacks on U.S. embassies in the Middle East and the implications of these attacks for security in the region. Both candidates have anchored their Middle Eastern foreign policies around the security of the country, and define their differences mainly in their proposed responses to threats against Israeli security.

Barack Obama

President Barack Obama has maintained an often-enigmatic relationship with Israel throughout his presidency. His approach to Israel has simultaneously generated high praise and harsh criticism from both sides of the ideological spectrum. Compared to past presidents, his position on Israel has been significantly more nuanced, but this nuance has not significantly hurt his base of support within the American Jewish community. Though the President's approval rating among Jewish Americans has dipped slightly, he has maintained high levels of support among this segment of the population throughout his term in office. In general, Jewish Americans approve of his handling of Israel and believe he is strongly pro-Israel.

This belief is not unfounded. Under the Obama administration, the U.S. sends over 3 billion dollars a year to the Israeli military, in addition to other forms of aid. Publicly, Obama repeatedly references America's close relationship with Israel and affirms a severe stance against actions that directly undermine it. In reaction to a unilateral Palestinian decision to pursue state recognition from the United Nations outside of the U.S. supported peace process, Obama stated the following:

"For the Palestinians, efforts to delegitimize Israel will end in failure. Symbolic actions to isolate Israel at the United Nations in September won't create an independent state. Palestinian leaders will not achieve peace or prosperity if Hamas insists on a path of terror and rejection. And Palestin-

ians will never realize their independence by denying the right of Israel to exist."

Still, Israel appears more isolated than it has ever been in its history. Only 22% of Israeli Jews in 2010 said that they are encouraged by the Obama administration's policies regarding the Middle East. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has frequently requested meetings with Obama and subsequently been turned down, most recently because the President was "busy"—instead of meeting with Netanyahu, the President flew to Las Vegas for a campaign fundraiser.

Obama, in a speech at the al-Azhar University in Cairo on June 4, 2009, became the first president to use the term "occupation" to describe Israeli-held land in the West Bank. His administration referred to the controversial Israeli settlements as "illegitimate" and has initiated a policy of actively promoting the suspension of further settlements, including those in the capital city Jerusalem.

Furthermore, subtle criticisms can be found in his statements lauding America's close relationship with Israel, as demonstrated by his following statement:

"Our friendship is rooted deeply in a shared history and shared values. Our commitment to Israel's security is unshakable. And we will stand against attempts to single it out for criticism in international forums. But precisely because of our friendship, it's important that we tell the truth: The status quo is unsustainable, and Israel too must act boldly to advance a lasting peace."

Obama, like the majority of Americans and Israelis, aspires to a peaceful Middle East. However, in reaching this goal, he seems to place more responsibility for achieving this peace upon Israel's shoulders than upon Palestinian groups. In May 2011 Obama proposed that Israel return to its pre-1967 borders, an act that would require Israel to give up both Gaza and the West Bank. In response, Netanyahu declared the size of Israel with those borders was "undefensible," and the necessary negotiations did not occur.

Obama's policies on Israel are tied inexorably with his policies regarding the greater Middle East. The most pressing issue surrounding these policies, and where the most visible policy divergence between the current U.S. government and Israel occurs, is the Iranian pursuit of nuclear weapons. Obama and his administration oppose an immediate military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities, which Israel claims are dangerously close to

achieving nuclear capabilities. Just weeks ago Netanyahu told the U.N. that Iran's program must be stopped before next spring. He has attempted to pressure Obama, who insists upon giving severe sanctions time to work, and has threatened that Israel could act unaided in offensive against Iran if necessary.

Barack Obama's positions on defense regarding the Middle East, and Iran in particular, are tipping the scales toward dissatisfaction. Although it is well known that he has increased monetary aid to Israel, Americans and Israelis alike see Iran and terrorism as an urgent security threat. The President's reluctance to articulate clear timelines for Iran contrasts sharply with Netanyahu's call for more aggressive policies. This perceived "weak" stance on Iran is the cause of recent uneasiness about the U.S. relationship with Israel and the decline in Obama's approval rating among Jewish voters. The Israeli public feels threatened by the visible divergence of military policies with their greatest ally and finds Obama's persistent snubbing of Netanyahu offensive; in order to address these concerns, Obama must strengthen and clarify diplomatic relations for the security of both nations.

Mitt Romney

This election season, Mitt Romney has pledged, if elected, to stand closer to his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu than Obama has during his presidency. The potential for a close partnership runs deep; both men worked for the Boston Consulting Group in their younger years and Netanyahu has said that, "despite our very different backgrounds, my sense is that we employ similar methods in analyzing problems and coming up with solutions for them."

This is in heavy contrast to Netanyahu's relationship with President Obama, which is visibly more distant and removed. This contrast exists for a reason. While Romney might have an easier time dealing personally with Netanyahu, the tighter alignment he proposes could also potentially endanger the United States were Netanyahu to exploit it. Unconditional support of Israel in the immediate future may have the detrimental effect of reducing America's soft power in the Middle East and would restrict U.S. policy options in the region.

Romney's campaign has argued that Obama has focused too much on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and not enough



President Barack Obama meets with Israeli President Shimon Peres in the Oval Office. *Photo/Pete Souza.*

on the other security issues Israel faces. The campaign has further contended that the unrest in the Middle East caused by the Arab Spring has a greater impact on Israel than events occurring in Palestine. While the Arab Spring clearly has implications for Israel's security, rolling back the United States' focus on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process could weaken any incentives the two nations have for negotiation and neglects the potential increases in Israeli security that could result from an agreement.

Romney has come under fire from the Obama campaign and various media outlets for the now infamous leaked video from a private fundraising event in Florida. The video captures Romney articulating his uncensored views on the possibility for peace in the region. In the video, Romney states with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that, "we have a potentially volatile situation but we sort of live with it, and we kick the ball down the field and hope that ultimately, somehow, something will happen and resolve it."

Romney has previously endorsed a two-state solution to the conflict, but this secret video implies that he may not push Israel for any progress in negotiations with the Pales-

tinians. Romney may attempt to maintain the status quo and focus his attention on other issues affecting Israel and the Middle East, which could be dissatisfying for Palestinians and leave one of the most serious problems in the Middle East unaddressed.

Beyond the Palestinian issue, Iran and its possible nuclear ambitions will pose a significant problem for either potential administration in 2013. Romney's strategy for dealing with Iran, and protecting Israel by extension, is multifaceted. He pledges to use tougher economic sanctions, provide support to Iranian opposition movements, and leave military options on the table.

He has also stressed the need for the United States to give stronger limitations on Iranian actions regarding its nuclear program. This could potentially limit future policy options by tying American leaders to past statements should Iran violate any commands, even if these violations were minimal. For instance, if a potential Romney administration stated that Iran could only enrich uranium to twenty percent, and Iran enriched its uranium to twenty-one percent, would the United States then engage with Iran militarily?

Beyond the Middle East, the Romney

campaign has argued that Obama has given up far too much in his negotiations with Russia over the missile defense shield and that changes to the proposal during the Obama administration threaten the security of the United States and allies such as Israel. Romney, like Obama, wants to have the shield running by 2020, but hopes to put pressure on Russia by placing key components for the shield in the Czech Republic and Poland. Obama has advocated a sea-based approach that would put any missile detectors on submarines. Romney, however, argues that a land-based system would present a stronger stance against countries that might attack American allies, particularly Israel.

While Romney has used the possibility of an Iranian nuclear program and the subsequent threat it poses to Israel as a criticism of Obama, their foreign policy positions are still not as divergent as in other important areas of concern for voters. Romney's forceful proposals could lead to a tighter alignment between the United States and Israel, but it is unclear if this would be beneficial to the United States in the long run or inappropriate in the context of a swiftly evolving Middle East.

SUPREME DECISION | 2012

Taryn Winston
Associate Editors

We rarely see them. No lavish fundraisers or rallies. No press conferences. No flashy banners or advertisements. Perhaps an occasional interview or public appearance. The nine justices of the United States Supreme Court remain relatively quiet and low-key compared to their counterparts on Capitol Hill and in the White House—so low-key that most Americans don't even know their names. In a survey conducted in 2010, only 28% of Americans correctly identified John Roberts as their current Chief Justice; even more shocking, 8% of Americans said the Chief Justice was Thurgood Marshall (who died in 1993) and 4% said it was current Sen. Majority Leader Harry Reid.

But make no mistake, these nine justices could very well be the most powerful policymakers—yes, policymakers—in the United States today. While their names may not be recognizable, their decisions continue to have a significant impact across the country. Consider *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, the landmark case establishing a woman's right to an abortion. Until that point, abortion was a relatively minor issue; it was certainly not the controversial mobilizer it is today. Or consider the Court's decision to uphold the Affordable Care Act earlier this year, a decision that secured a revolutionizing of our current health care system. In both cases, the Supreme Court reshaped public policy and broadened the political agenda.

Historically, the Supreme Court has been portrayed as the most stable and fair institution in U.S. government. But we must not forget that the Supreme Court is first and foremost a political institution and, like all political institutions, is subject to rapid change and heavy influence by the dominant party. For instance, in his first term, President Obama made his mark on the Supreme Court by appointing two justices who shared his ideological beliefs. Moreover, there is reason to believe that the next four years could bring even more changes to the bench. With four sitting justices approaching their

80s, a steady wave of retirements is likely drawing near. The justices who replace them will undoubtedly reflect the next person to appoint them.

With the appointments of Sonia Sotomayor in 2009 and Elena Kagan in 2010, two relatively young and liberal women, President Obama attempted to pull a fairly conservative Court back to his side. If he is reelected to office, it will become increasingly more difficult for him to continue to do so. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, part of the Court's liberal voting bloc, has hinted at retirement for years now ever since her health began to deteriorate. Thus, Ginsburg is likely to relinquish her seat on the bench if President Obama is reelected, knowing that he will pick a liberal justice to replace her. However, a liberal replacing a liberal would not shift the Court any further to the left. The same applies to Justice Stephen Breyer, another liberal justice in his late 70s. President Obama's best chance at altering the Court lies with the swing vote, Justice Anthony Kennedy. If Kennedy were to retire, President Obama could appoint a more liberal justice to replace him, giving the Court a liberal majority for the first time in decades. Of course, this is assuming the justice would be confirmed by the Senate (a challenge in and of itself).

Perhaps even more intriguing to consider is the future of the Supreme Court under President Romney. If Romney is elected, Justices Ginsburg and Breyer would likely opt to retain their positions for another four years in fear that their replacements would be far more conservative than themselves. Justice Antonin Scalia, also in his late 70s and easily the Court's most vocal conservative, could be Romney's first chance at an appointment. Similar to President Obama's situations with Ginsburg and Breyer, this would do little to shift the Court in Romney's desired direction. So then once more, Mitt Romney's best chance at altering the Court is with the replacement of Justice Kennedy. Though Kennedy does tend to lean conservative, his retirement would give Romney the opportunity to move the Court even further to the right.

Truthfully, it is very difficult to predict when vacancies on the Supreme Court arise. Some justices retire unexpectedly, like Justice Sandra Day O'Connor in 2005; and some pass away during their tenure, such as Justices Thurgood Marshall and William Rehnquist. But when the opportunity presents itself, pay close attention to its ramifications. Take, for instance, *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. When the case was originally heard, the majority of the justices were hesitant to overturn segregation in public schools. However, the Court drastically changed directions after the death of Chief Justice Fred Vinson and the subsequent appointment of Chief Justice Earl Warren. Under Warren's leadership, the Court unanimously found that "separate but equal" was unconstitutional.

The replacement of a single justice altered the entire nature of the Court. And with highly disputed issues still waiting to be resolved, our future very well could be decided in the coming presidential election.

“WE MUST NOT FORGET THAT THE SUPREME COURT IS FIRST AND FOREMOST A POLITICAL INSTITUTION AND, LIKE ALL POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS, IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE QUICKLY AND HEAVILY INFLUENCED BY THE PARTICULAR PARTY IN CONTROL.”

RON PAUL &

THE PARADOX OF MODERN CONSERVATISM



Gautam Narula
Associate Editor

Ron Paul is no stranger to a presidential campaign. He ran for president as a Libertarian in 1988 and a Republican in 2008 and 2012. In 1988, he received less than .5% of the vote. In 2008, in the Republican primary, his numbers hovered in the 4-5% range. However, in 2012, his campaign ignited. He polled nearly twice as high in the primaries and was embraced by an enthusiastic crowd of young supporters. Even when it became clear that Mitt Romney would be the Republican nominee, Paul's zealous supporters were still scheming to use the delegates process to take the nomination. And Paul, virtually ignored by the Republican establishment in the past, was sent off with a four minute tribute video where he was praised and celebrated by the leaders of the very same establishment.

Paul's surge in support among the young is no surprise. A recent *Reason* poll showed that 61% of young voters would choose a socially liberal, fiscally conservative candidate. In the past two decades, polling by CNN has shown a marked increase of the proportion of Americans who subscribe to libertarian viewpoints. Ron Paul's increasing popularity has been awkward for the Republican Party: his supporters are often the most vocal critics of mainstream Republicans, and his ideology runs counter to much of the party's stated platform. His rise highlights the paradox characterizing the core of modern conservatism. Although the Republican Party champions itself as the party of small government, it is fueled by broad coalitions that seek to increase the size and power of government.

The best known big government Republican coalition is social conservatism, embodied in candidates like Rick Santo-

rum. Social conservatives see government as a societal enforcer of morality. To this end, social conservatives want to expand government power to increase the role of religion in public life (for instance, with prayer in public schools) and use it to prevent gay marriage, abortions, pornography, drug legalization, and other actions they feel undermine society's traditional values, overriding the views of individual states if necessary. The second big government force is the militaristic wing of the Republican Party. This faction wants a large, robust military—and hence, a large, robust defense budget—and is more open to abrogating civil liberties in favor of enhanced military power, as in the cases of Guantanamo Bay, wiretapping by the National Security Agency, and the use of torture or “enhanced interrogation techniques”. The big government Republicans were most visible under the administration of George W. Bush, when his expansion of Medicare, increase of the federal government's role in education, and deficit spending met little opposition from Republicans in Congress.

This leads to the question: why do libertarians associate with the Republican Party when much of their ideology is fundamentally at odds with the Republican mainstream? Ron Paul ran as a Republican, as did Gary Johnson before he dropped out to run as a Libertarian. The Koch brothers, the libertarian oil magnates who have spoken in favor of gay marriage, marijuana legalization, and reduced military spending, are expected to spend nearly half a billion dollars trying to oust Barack Obama. Polls show the majority of prospective libertarian voters, eliminating the choice to vote for Gary Johnson, would vote for Mitt Romney. When the third axis of libertarianism is reduced to the two dimensional scale of Republican and Democrat, the Republicans

tend to win out.

But the question remains—why? Historically, libertarianism has found its roots in the Republican Party. Barry Goldwater, often called the founder of modern conservatism, was himself a strong libertarian. Although he believed in a powerful, militaristic America to take on the challenges of the Cold War, he became a vocal critic of the growth of the religious right and social conservatives, forcefully opposing them on issues of abortion, gay rights, drug legalization, and religion in public life. And perhaps, philosophically, libertarians view social liberalism differently than liberals do. For liberals, social liberalism is a movement to seek equality and opportunity for historically persecuted or disadvantaged groups—to that extent, it is an activist movement. From a libertarian perspective, social issues tend to fall under a larger umbrella of small government, where social liberalism is part of a passive freedom of choice untouched by government. Indeed, libertarians are most vocal when it comes to reducing spending and taxes. For the end goal of smaller government and reductions in spending, an alliance with the Republicans is more promising than the social liberals of the Democratic Party.

What does this mean for the next four years? In truth, not much. The number of economically conservative, socially liberal voters is still too small to bridge the gap between two increasingly polarized parties. The Republican Party cannot accommodate libertarian voters without alienating powerful and well funded religious and social conservative groups. But considering Ron Paul's popularity among youth and his increasing appeal to the general electorate, Republicans and Democrats alike may one day have to face the fact that libertarianism is here to stay.



BARACK OBAMA
44TH PRESIDENT OF THE
UNITED STATES

SOCIAL

Same-sex marriage: President Obama supports state legalization of same-sex marriage; his Justice Department has declined to defend the Defense of Marriage Act.

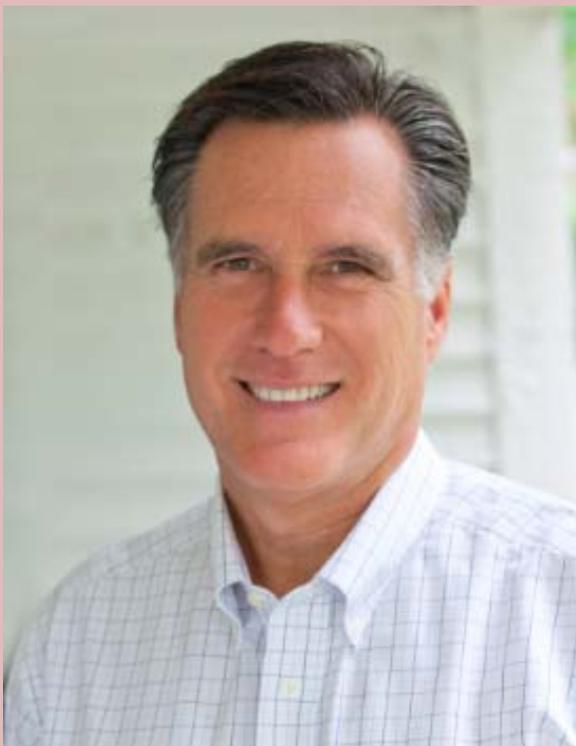
Abortion: Barack Obama is pro-choice, and has criticized Paul Ryan for supporting a ban of all abortions. He supports the Freedom of Choice Act, which would eliminate many state restrictions on abortion.

Contraception: President Obama supports funding for contraception. Though he has since backed away from this position, his administration has supported requiring religious employers to provide contraceptive coverage in employee's health insurance plans.

Immigration: Obama supports a pathway to citizenship for illegal immigrants and a higher immigration cap for skilled legal immigrants. However, his administration has deported more illegal immigrants than any before it. President Obama supports the DREAM Act.

NDAA: President Obama signed the NDAA, promising in an attached Signing Statement that he would not use the law's far-reaching powers to arrest American citizens on American soil.

Drug war: President Obama does not support marijuana legalization. During his presidency, the DEA has raided medical marijuana dispensaries in the states that have legalized them.



MITT ROMNEY
FORMER GOVERNOR OF
MASSACHUSETTS

SOCIAL

Same-Sex Marriage: "... it is so important to preserve traditional marriage – the joining together of one man and one woman. As president, Mitt will not only appoint an Attorney General who will defend the Defense of Marriage Act . . . but he will also champion a Federal Marriage Amendment to the Constitution defining marriage as between one man and one woman."

Abortion: "Mitt Romney is pro-life." Governor Romney has recently promised to oppose any legislation that would limit current abortion practices, though he has supported defunding Planned Parenthood and appointed judges opposed to *Roe v. Wade*.

Contraception: Mitt Romney does not believe in the "contraception mandate" on religious institution employers, calling this an "assault on liberty." He opposes the comprehensive contraception ban that other candidates suggested.

Immigration: Mitt Romney supports raising country caps on legal immigration, raising immigration caps for skilled workers, and granting Permanent Residency to immigrants who earn an advanced degree in Mathematics, Science, or Engineering. Mitt Romney supports building "a high-tech fence to enhance border security" and a process of "self-deportation" for illegal immigrants.

NDAA and civil liberties: Mitt Romney said he would have signed the National Defense Authorization Act, calling the [support of] al-Qaeda "treason."

Drug war: Governor Romney has promised to fight state efforts to legalize medical marijuana "tooth and nail."

ECONOMIC

Taxes: Obama supports Bush tax cuts for those making less than \$250,000 annually. He supports the Buffett Rule, which would require Americans making more than one million dollars a year to pay a 30 percent tax rate minimum.

Energy: Obama supports an “all of the above” approach to energy policy -- raising fuel standards for carmakers, increasing natural gas production, and federally funding alternative fuel research.

Healthcare: President Obama supports the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, his signature legislative achievement. The act requires Americans to procure health insurance, subsidize it, and, according to CBO reports, lower the federal government’s healthcare spending. The PPACA will ensure virtually all Americans have health insurance.

Medicare: President Obama criticizes Romney/Ryan’s Medicare plan, saying “Their voucher plan for Medicare would bankrupt Medicare. Our plan strengthens Medicare.” He has not released a detailed plan on Medicare, instead establishing an independent panel of experts to ensure Medicare’s viability.

Social Security: “To put us on solid ground, we should also find a bipartisan solution to strengthen Social Security for future generations. We must do it without putting at risk current retirees, the most vulnerable, or people with disabilities; without slashing benefits for future generations; and without subjecting Americans’ guaranteed retirement income to the whims of the stock market.”

NATIONAL SECURITY

Afghanistan: President Obama supports the current 2014 withdrawal deadline that his administration has set. The “Afghan Surge” that he initiated in 2009 ended in 2012.

Iran: President Obama does not believe the US should permit Iran to obtain nuclear weapons. Unlike Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, however, he does not believe this “red line” for military action should be drawn at Iranian enrichment of uranium. The President does not believe a nuclear Iran could be contained.

Israel: The president affirms the close alliance between Israel and the United States, but has criticized Prime Minister Netanyahu for Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

Foreign Aid: Obama supports foreign aid and has increased foreign aid spending as President.

China: The Obama administration has introduced a “Pacific pivot”, stationing a majority of US Navy forces in the Pacific Ocean that has widely been seen as an answer to rising China. He has not brought an international case against Chinese trade policies. He has engaged regional American allies (notably members of the ANZAC and SEATO organizations) to counter Chinese influence.

ECONOMIC

Taxes: Romney has released a number of specific tax proposals, including plans to “make permanent, across-the-board 20 percent cut in marginal rates, eliminate taxes for taxpayers with annual gross income below \$200,000 on interest, dividends, and capital gains, eliminate the Estate Tax, cut the corporate rate to 25 percent.”

Energy: “Romney will make America an energy superpower, rapidly and responsibly increasing our own production and partnering with our allies Canada and Mexico to achieve energy independence on this continent by 2020.”

Healthcare: Romney hopes to repeal Obamacare in full. “In place of Obamacare, Mitt will pursue policies that give each state the power to craft a health care reform plan that is best for its own citizens.”

Medicare: The Ryan Plan, supported by Mitt Romney, will make no changes for current Medicare beneficiaries. For future beneficiaries under 55, it will institute a voucher program, defining benefits and using private insurers to lower costs.

Social Security: Governor Romney has promised not to change Social Security for current beneficiaries. To address future budget shortfalls, he supports raising the Social Security retirement age and reducing benefits for wealthy retirees

Debt: Mitt Romney promises to balance the budget by his second term. He does not support the Simpson-Bowles sequestration that will trigger automatic cuts to defense and other discretionary spending if Congress does not pass a debt reduction deal by January 1, 2013.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Afghanistan: Governor Romney does not object to the current 2014 withdrawal date, but supports a more military centric approach to counterinsurgency.

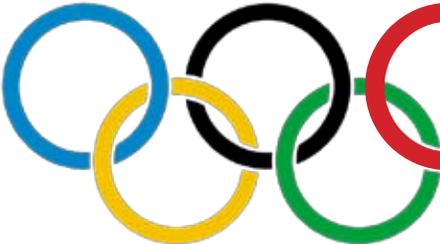
Iran: “Mitt Romney believes that it is unacceptable for Iran to possess a nuclear weapon. U.S. policy toward Iran must begin with an understanding on Iran’s part that a military option to deal with their nuclear program remains on the table”

Israel: “We have a commitment to Israel and to Israel’s security that is profound and unique. . . Israel’s existence as a Jewish state is not up for debate.” Mitt Romney has criticized Obama for his disputes with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

Foreign Aid: Mitt Romney supports a \$100 million cut to foreign aid, but believes foreign aid can have national security and humanitarian uses.

China/Asia: Governor Romney has stated that his administration would label China a “currency manipulator” and bring complaints against China to the World Trade Organization. “Mitt Romney will implement a strategy that makes the path of regional hegemony for China far more costly than the alternative path of becoming a responsible partner in the international system.”

RUSSIAN OLYMPICS



SOCHI 2014 FACES A CHILLY RECEPTION

Megan White

Associate Senior Editor of International Affairs

For two weeks during the summer of 2012, the world stood still. Barriers blurred and blaring newscasts faded into the background as people from China to Granada put away their conflicts, big and small, and turned their attention to the city on the Thames. All eyes were on London, host of the 30th Summer Olympics.

But with the speed of Usain Bolt crossing a finish line, the Games had come to an end, and people had returned to worrying about presidential elections and the economy. In less than two years, however, the world is scheduled to pause again. On February 7, 2014 comes the opening of the 22nd Winter Olympic Games. And this time, the global spotlight will fall on Russia for the first time since the collapse of the U.S.S.R. Will the country be ready to roll out the red carpet?

The process began five years ago in July of 2007, when the International Olympic Committee announced that Sochi, Russia would host the 2014 Winter Games. With a humid subtropical climate, it will be the warmest city to ever host the Winter Olympics. Olympic officials cited an abundance of hotel space, as well as strong public and political backing, as strong contributing factors in the selection. Dmitry Chernyshenko, chief executive of the Sochi 2014 Organizing Committee, believes that the city is up to the challenge, and President Vladimir Putin has taken special interest in the project.

The former Soviet summer playground has already begun receiving a face lift – one with an \$18 billion price tag. Of the \$18 billion, raised by Russian organizers such as

Sberbank, Rosneft, and Interros, \$2 billion will go to the organizing committee, \$8 billion will go toward constructing the venues, and \$7.2 billion will go toward a rail and highway project with the Russian government funding additional infrastructure projects. The high prices have not gone unnoticed. One Russian magazine quipped that for \$7.2 billion, the roads could be paved in one centimeter of beluga caviar. But for the Russian government, the stakes are exceedingly high, and no improvement will be considered “too much.”

“...THE GLOBAL SPOTLIGHT WILL FALL ON RUSSIA FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE COLLAPSE OF THE U.S.S.R. WILL THE COUNTRY BE READY TO ROLL OUT THE RED CARPET?”

The Sochi Games will mark the first time the Olympics have ever been held in the Russian Federation, and the games will likely be heavily compared to the controversial 1980 Moscow Olympics in the former Soviet Union. That year, in an act of protest against

the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, the United States formally withdrew from the Moscow Games, convincing over 60 other nations to do the same. Now, 30 years later, Russia is back on the world stage with a chance to prove how far it has come since the Soviet collapse and to instill a stronger sense of national pride after a several rocky years. President Putin described the event as a way to mobilize the government and society toward a single, positive national purpose. He has admitted that there are skeptics, and he intends to prove them wrong.

Hosting the Olympic Games is by no means a small task. The plans for Sochi involve the construction of two main event parks. One, a compact sea-level park, will house the skating venues and a 40,000-seat Olympic stadium. Snowboarding, skiing, bobsledding, the luge, and cross-country skiing will take place at a much larger mountain park, which will include trails as high as 6,725 feet above sea level. The \$7.2 billion rail and highway project will involve connecting the parks with a 30-mile stretch of road, a high-speed train, and 17 gondolas. So far, Sochi's ski facilities have been built, and the majority of the venues will be finished by the end of 2012. To test the facilities, Sochi will host 22 international sports events leading up to February 7, 2014.

Due to Sochi's warm climate (the seaside park will be dotted with palm and magnolia trees), critics have questioned whether or not there will be enough snow for the games. Officials have assured that this will not be a problem and have allayed these concerns by packing reserve snow into storage facilities, a process that will continue over the course of the next year. And just in case the estimated



Map of the coastal cluster of Sochi Olympic park, for the 2014 Winter Olympics. *Photo Illustration/Sémhur*

250,000 cubic meters of stored snow fails to fit the bill, event organizers will have 430 snow machines installed and ready to go on a moment's notice.

Sochi's proximity to the turbulent regions of Chechnya, Kabardino-Balkaria, and North Ossetia has rendered security another significant concern. Chernyshenko has promised "the safest games ever," ensuring that security forces will reinforce natural protections provided by the sea and the mountains. Rather than outsource security functions to private contractors, as was done in London, the Russian police are taking responsibility for the Sochi Games.

Despite Putin and Chernyshenko's confidence, the readying for the games has seen its fair share of hiccups and has stepped on its fair share of toes. Preparations have begun to touch a nerve with Sochi's residents, in particular. Construction has led to an uprooting of residential neighborhoods, rationed electricity, severed power lines, and landslides. Over 2,000 families have been displaced, many without compensation. The environment has suffered as well. The highway and rail project has cut through the Mzymta River

watershed, disrupting a fragile ecosystem. Greenpeace and the World Wildlife Fund have withdrawn from consultations with event organizers, stating that their ideas for sustainability were being ignored. In order to prepare for the strain on its power grid, the project's organizers have begun construction on the world's largest natural power plant. While Russian law requires an assessment of the environmental impact of power plants to be made public, bureaucratic red tape has kept this information under wraps, and the public has taken action.

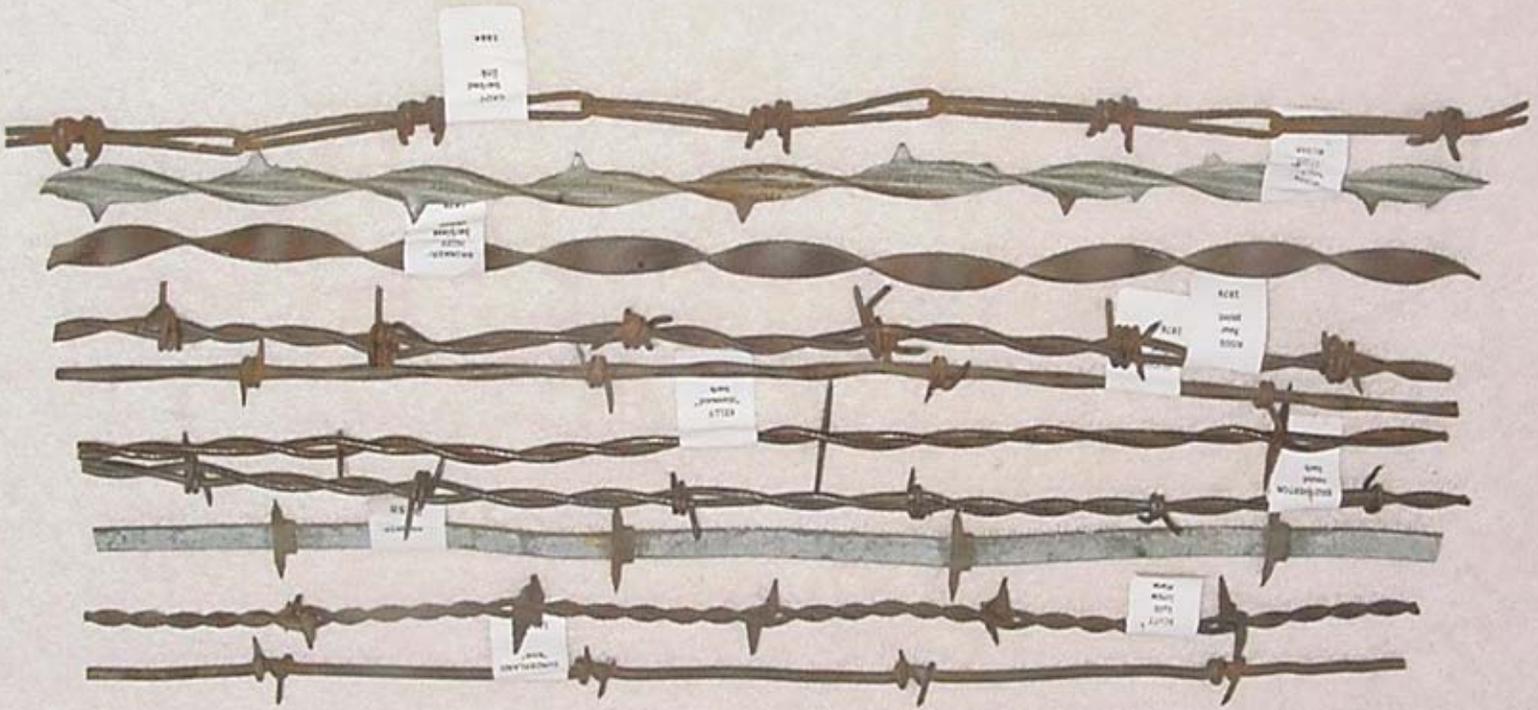
Residents across Sochi have spent recent months picketing and attempting to disassemble production sites, yet their concerns have been largely ignored by the government as a whole. The detainment of two peaceful protestors has incited further riots. The most prescient security threat to the nation may stem from this local instability, and security measures still have a long way to go. In May, officials deftly foiled a terrorist attack on Sochi, seizing weapons and ammunition in Abkhazia. In August, however, a pair of scavengers was able to slip past a security checkpoint and into the construction zone

and fill a trailer with scrap metal.

Protests of the games have sprung up internationally as well. In cities such as New York, Istanbul, and Brussels, descendants of the Circassian people have taken to the streets, calling to attention the brutal, forced removal of their ancestors from the Sochi area in 1864, an event that is not currently recognized by the Russian government. Protesters have also rallied against organizers' decision to ban Pride House events celebrating homosexual inclusion in sport, claiming that they "contradict the basics of public morality and the policy of the state in the area of family motherhood and childhood protection."

The 2014 Winter Olympics have thus far proven controversial. Though there have been fringe campaigns to boycott the games, it remains unlikely that the world will see a repeat of 1980. Still, Russia has a significant amount of work to do before February 2014. With over a year to go, whether or not Russia will be prepared for the world stage remains to be seen.

THE (OTHER) EUROPEAN CRISIS



Jacqueline Van De Velde
Associate Editor

In the wake of the Arab spring and in the midst of the European debt crisis, the issue of migration has risen to epic proportions in Europe. How does the European Union balance free movement, opportunity, and inclusivity – while also protecting its citizens, maintaining security, and not violating and not violating the human rights of immigrants?

Europe is filled with immigrants. According to economist Philippe Legrain, in 2009, over 3 million immigrants of other origins entered the EU. However, the numbers for recent years are likely higher – and steadily rising.

Turmoil in North Africa and the Middle East has left many countries in chaos. Burdened by high unemployment for the youth, corruption, instability, and human rights

abuse, many individuals have left their homeland and traveled to Europe seeking relief, hope, and a future – a future that Europe is unable to give them. Struggling with high unemployment and slow-growing economies, many European countries say they are simply incapable of absorbing poor migrants.

Fears of immigrants have strengthened European discontent, turning the deep-seated divisions over economic and fiscal policies into legitimate ideological chasms. Experts say the issue is proving to be at least as problematic — and potentially as destabilizing — as the European economic crises. Anti-immigrant sentiments are reflected in right-wing and explicitly anti-immigrant political parties, such as the Northern League in Italy and the English Defense League in England. And, oddly enough, these parties are doing well, polling at 20 percent, and

sometimes higher.

And then there is the Schengen Agreement, which enables people to travel between 22 European countries (Britain and Ireland excluded) without having their passports checked. The Schengen was a milestone in European integration, particularly given the nationalism and bureaucratic red tape that has plagued the continent for centuries. For refugees, the Schengen essentially means a free pass through Europe, once they cross the external border.

Though the issue is intrinsically communal within the European continent, there is no mechanism to solve it at the supranational level. Individual European countries create their own policies for handling immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Associated with the Schengen, under a European law known as the Dublin Protocol, the country in

which migrant first arrives bears most of the responsibility including determining the immigration status of the migrants, processing their asylum applications, and caring for them during the procedures. For border countries, where the influx of immigrants is overwhelming, the finances needed to fund all of the required legal processes required simply do not exist. Italy alone has tens of thousands of applicants, and, like most Europeans, the Italian public is unhappy about it.

The Schengen agreement and the Dublin Protocols have forced the burden of mass migration to fall on the external border countries of the EU, and they cannot keep up with the demand. Many have constructed walls, fences, and installed security, which have ultimately proven ineffective. So, they turn to foreign policy to help them.

Countries like Spain and Italy have forged close relationships with North African leaders, persuading migrants' countries of origin to keep their citizens from emigrating. They donate equipment and economic aid. Italy even signed an agreement with Libya in 2008 in which it pledged to pay Libya \$5 billion over 20 years if they would deter citizens from migrating to Europe. It has been successful.

But human rights advocates claim the agreement worked because human rights are being blatantly disregarded. There are reports of Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya employing brutal tactics to keep immigrants from ever getting near European shores. In 2009, the Human Rights Watch reported that some Libyan migrants testified being detained, beaten, and robbed of their valuables and documents. Electric shock batons were used to force migrants off boats. They were then returned to traffickers, who held them captive for ransom.

Spain has two enclaves on the African shores: Ceuta and Melilla. Nestled on the

northern shores of Africa, the picturesque colonial town boasts of sunsets over the Mediterranean, windswept palm trees, and a £200 million, six-meter-high barbed wire fence armed with infrared cameras, tear gas canisters, motion sensors, and control towers. Guards stand ready to fire on any migrants coming from Morocco who would attempt to enter the EU illegally.

The Moroccan-Spanish border has seen horrific violence. In 2005, 11,000 sub-Saharan Africans stormed the border fence around Melilla. While some breached the wall, several were shot while trying to cross. Eventually, some of the immigrants were turned over to the Moroccan police – who promptly dumped them into the Sahara.

While these bilateral agreements are certainly not up to par with human rights standards, they have been effective. In the past year, immigrants began turning to the land border between Greece and Turkey as an alternative route to the dangerous and fiercely-guarded African coast. The defenses do their job. The Economist estimates that 2,000 people die every year on their way from Africa to Europe. Dozens drown crossing the Mediterranean, with bodies of the unsuccessful often washing up on the coasts of Sicily and Malta.

Even if the Spanish authorities have been successful in controlling immigration, at what cost? Now the people of Ceuta and Melilla live in a fortified city behind three layers of fencing.

So, who is being punished: the immigrants, or the citizens?

Immigration will continue, as long as human rights violations are occurring in the third country nationals' countries of origin. Member States of the EU need to engage in bilateral and multilateral diplomacy with the countries of origin, taking a firm stance on promoting human rights and giving economic

incentives for countries that do so. While promoting border security is acceptable, immigration officials must be trained in best practices to ensure that all third country nationals that enter the EU are accorded the respect owed them by their humanity. While expenses will be incurred to ensure the safety and security of these immigrants, the expenses will be preventative; helping to curtail the tides of immigration and helping to promote justice internationally can only have positive spillover effects.

“BURDENED BY HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT FOR THE YOUTH, CORRUPTION, INSTABILITY, AND HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE, MANY INDIVIDUALS HAVE LEFT THEIR HOMELAND AND TRAVELED TO EUROPE SEEKING RELIEF, HOPE, AND A FUTURE – A FUTURE THAT EUROPE IS UNABLE TO GIVE THEM.”



AFRICA:

How our economic and security relationships have developed on Obama's watch.

Virginia McNally
Managing Editor

When President Obama was elected in 2008, many anticipated that his actions toward Africa, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, would be different than that of most U.S. Presidents. Not only was his father Kenyan, but he had expressed an interest along the campaign trail in making significant changes to the U.S.-Africa relationship. Many African leaders were optimistic, ecstatic even, but others were cautious. While many Western leaders have been called “imperialist” and “colonialist” after delivering criticism to African states, it was expected that African leaders would not meet Obama’s suggestions and criticism with the same responses. Despite this dynamic, Obama’s actions were not projected to be necessarily revolutionary.

Those less-than-optimistic speculators were partially correct. The recession got worse. Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan persisted. The Arab Spring spread like wildfire. Tension with Iran tightened. Because of these factors, a consistent and focused engagement with Africa was nowhere in sight.

Africa was not outright ignored. The U.S. government appeared to engage on an “as needed” basis, responding to conflict in Ivory Coast, Somalia, Kenya, Sudan, and with the Lord’s Resistance Army. In recent months, the State Department and President Obama have been quick to point out these “successes” in the U.S.-Africa relation-

ship.

However, as *The Washington Post* reported earlier this year, American strategy in Africa was highly focused on security interests. Early this year, secret intelligence activity in Africa took the form of spy planes disguised as civilian aircraft. The purpose of these planes? To carry out a “shadow war” against al-Qaeda and its affiliated groups. Spy planes are supplemented with drone planes in East Africa, and one military official noted the possibility of drone activity expanding in the future. For now, small commercial planes best blend in with the scenery. Military intelligence operations are also supplemented with contractor-operated planes, a controversial tactic often used in similar situations.

The military is also training African forces not only to carry out aid missions, but also to find and capture terror suspects. With attacks on the rise in Nigeria and Somalia, both strongholds for al-Qaeda affiliated groups, many see Africa as the world’s next big security threat.

While this strategy began in 2007 with the establishment of The U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), the Obama administration supported and enlarged it as part of its security strategy in that part of the globe. In order to implement this strategy, the U.S. had to befriend the leaders of Burkina Faso and Uganda. Both leaders have been in power for over two decades and took power forcefully. While generally regarded as regional menaces, both have nonethe-

less played crucial roles in cooperating with AFRICOM’s surveillance and intelligence strategy.

Meanwhile, little has been done in regards to the other aspects of the U.S.-Africa relationship. Actively supporting democracy and development has been limited to engagement with the above-mentioned countries, an emphasis on food security, and the continued support of the 2000 African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). The Obama administration has also largely ignored the exponential growth of Chinese activity in Africa, and has allowed its largest competitor to take advantage of many lucrative investment opportunities. While the U.S. will not trade with states if it protests their questionable democratic practices, the nation will engage with such states to fulfill security interests.

As *The Washington Post* broke the story about U.S. intelligence efforts in Africa, the Obama administration revealed a new Africa policy which failed to mention these intelligence operations. In fact, most agree that the policy was bland and contained nothing new or revolutionary. The new policy was made official when Secretary of State Hillary Clinton travelled to six African countries in late July and early August. Her trip was deemed largely successful as she connected with leaders through speeches and the occasional dance. Once again though, security interests seemed to reign paramount.

Or do they? The Obama administration

appears to have overlooked the fact that often the root of unrest, leading to violence and terror activity, is a lack of economic prospects. While addressing current security threats is necessary, a few years of economic depression combined with ever-increasing influence from al-Qaeda will lead to a bigger threat in the future. Surveillance may be seen as the ultimate preventative security strategy, but building economic relationships and combating unemployment should replace surveillance as the preventative aspect of our strategy in Africa.

This approach puts all U.S. activity in Africa in terms of security. An effective security approach will not allow development goals to fall by the wayside while military efforts get the lion's share of funding and attention. Even those who remain skeptical about supporting democracy as a security tactic cannot argue with the fact that democracy and good governance will better foster grassroots economic growth, thus destroying conditions which breed terrorists.

Development, democracy, and security interests are not mutually exclusive; in fact, they are all inherently tied. Given America's concern with security threats from the Middle East and Africa, using a more balanced security approach to support development and democracy initiatives will allow for more progress in a well-rounded Africa strategy, not one that simply regurgitates past rhetoric leading to minimal results. USAID and the Africa Bureau of the State Department will become actors for security interests, and the understanding of how to keep America safe will be broadened to encompass economic development and democratization strategy.





Is VENEZUELA the new *Cuba?*

Marco Roca
Associate Editor

**“THE STATUS QUO IS
UNSUSTAINABLE.
ALTHOUGH VENEZUELA
SUFFERS THE WORLD’S
GREATEST GAP
BETWEEN RICH AND
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With the closing of the October 7 election, Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez reveled in the news that he would be serving an unprecedented third term. However, not everyone in Venezuela shared in the joy of the re-elected commander-in-chief. Many believe that Venezuela is on the verge of a revolution, as the rich are losing many of their holdings or leaving the country altogether. The departure of much of the country’s wealth has obviously caused serious economic strain and turmoil. While this has been an ongoing process since Chávez’s first inauguration in February 1999, Venezuela is becoming more like Cuba each day.

As always, the two countries’ leadership is a good place to start conducting an effective comparison. Picture Chávez next to Fidel Castro, Cuba’s long-standing ex-president and current Prime Minister; the resemblance

is undeniable. Castro came to national prominence in Cuba when he led the unsuccessful Moncada Barracks Attacks in July 1953. Similarly, Chávez achieved his “glory” when he directed a failed coup d’état in February of 1992. After their failed raids, both Castro and Chávez were imprisoned for a short period of time before assuming national power. Just as Fidel Castro set up his brother, Raul Castro, in several positions of Cuban power (the most recent being the presidency), Hugo Chávez has set up his brother, Adan Chávez, in several political posts as well. Although Adan is now both Hugo’s chief of staff and chief Marxist consultant, it is worth noting that Adan was originally the Venezuelan ambassador to Cuba, clearly depicting where Venezuela’s foreign policy priorities lie. Chávez frequently refers to Castro as his mentor and the mastermind behind the “revolutionary democracy” found in Cuba. In an effort to become more like his seasoned chum, Chávez has recently been pushing the



Hugo Chávez on a visit to Guatemala. *Photo/Agência Brasil*

Venezuelan congress to let him run for an indefinite presidential post.

For all of their similarities, one important difference to denote between the two leaders is that Chávez has the advantage of democratic legitimacy. This magnificent boon to the Chávez regime stems from fair and accessible Venezuelan elections. Therefore, no matter how many times Chávez claims that, "Venezuela is traveling towards the same sea as the Cuban people, a sea of happiness and of real social justice and peace," the United States will have a hard time reverting to the Truman Doctrine.

While a strong bond between two heads of government tends to bring countries closer together, the relationship between Cuba and Venezuela stretches far beyond their notorious leaders. The two Latin American countries have developed an amiable partnership, forming joint business ventures, conducting large financial transactions, exchanging technologies, and working together on intelligence and military matters. Venezuela has found reassurance in Cuba's experience with communist policies, and Cuba has helped Venezuela design systems such as Misión Mercal, which provides subsidies for food and basic essentials, and the Venezuelan medical system. The latter serves as an encapsulating microcosm of the symbiotic relationship, in which Venezuela gives Cuba discounted oil in exchange for well-trained Cuban doctors. Despite his myopia about keeping Venezuela self-reliant, Chávez actually went to Cuba to have his malignant cancer tumors removed.

Geographical circumstances alone cause major discrepancies in government structures, Venezuela being over twice the size of California with one of the world's largest oil reserves, while Cuba stands as an impoverished Caribbean island nation. Either way, both countries have nationalized or, as in Venezuela's case, are nationalizing their country's largest businesses and suppliers of goods

and services. Since Venezuela is "filthy rich" in oil reserves, it has been able to provide its people with gas for \$.09 a gallon. Through Misión Barrio Adentro (Inside Neighborhood Mission), 40 percent of Venezuelans receive medical care (largely provided by Cuban doctors) completely free of charge.

Regardless of how much the Venezuelan masses may enjoy these benefits and countless others, the oil reserves do not begin to cover the price tag, and the status quo is unsustainable. Although Venezuela suffers the world's greatest gap between rich and poor, the answer is not to take excessively from the fortunate few. Chávez has progressively limited the earning potential of and the motivation for the rich to live in Venezuela at all. Venezuela came dead last (183rd out of 183) in the 2011 world ranking of international property rights, and the government has set so many rules as to how much profit a company is allowed to enjoy, that Venezuela came in at 172nd out of 183 (after war-torn Afghanistan and Iraq) in the World Bank's 2011 "Doing Business Report." Monetary stability has followed suit in decay, and it is now impossible to trade bolivars for dollars. As The Real Deal first reported, Venezuelans are coming to the Miami real estate market in droves. This is largely due to the so-called "Chávez effect," or wealthy Venezuelans' concerns over the economic policies of their president.

The United States may find it has a new communist force to reckon with in the near future. However, Venezuela is the United States' fourth largest supplier of foreign crude oil, and Venezuela is thus essential to the American economy. Combined with the fact Chávez still maintains democratic legitimacy, it is not only unlikely, but almost impossible that the United States will ever place an embargo on Venezuela. This allows Venezuela the funding and infiltration power Cuba only ever dreamed of.

The question remains: is a revolution really upon Venezuela? The statistics indubitably color that reality, as violence in Venezuela has spiked recently, with more than an 11 percent increase from the same period in 2011. With Chávez's recent re-election, the nature of the violence is increasingly politically charged. Reflective of violence in the Cuban Revolution from 1953 to 1959, the rich are fleeing for economic and personal safety reasons, leaving an industrial hole in Venezuela. Even though this was slated to be a closely contested election, it may be the last of its kind in Venezuela. This unfortunate reality will continue to prevail, as those who stand to lose from Chávez' policies will continue to depart at alarming rates. With many of Venezuela's elites carrying on as expatriates, Chávez will be left with his base demographic supporting him blindly in his "red dream."

THE DEATH OF ETHIOPIAN PRIME MINISTER

MELES ZENAWI

Tia Ayele
Associate Editor

Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's twenty year reign over Ethiopia came to an abrupt end in August when he unexpectedly passed away due to unspecified illnesses. Prime Minister Zenawi died at the age of 57, leaving behind a long legacy of food security and rapid economic development. His contributions to the nation have not gone unnoticed by the Ethiopian people, and the loss of the nation's visionary is felt far and wide. In the capital city of Addis Ababa alone, pictures of Zenawi can be found everywhere; his face appears on the windows of local coffee shops and is plastered on every major street corner.

Although the nation has been mourning his death, reflections on the prime minister's legacy are far from purely nostalgic. Along with the Prime Minister's success in developing Ethiopia's economy comes a darker history filled with government corruption and human rights violations.

Many critics of the Prime Minister claim that his economic reforms were made at the steep cost of democracy. The government claims to be a Federal Republic, but Zenawi's regime was notable for widespread human rights violations. Civil liberties were practically non-existent at times, and there have been grueling restrictions on civil society, especially on freedom of speech, association, and assembly. Two human rights groups, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have publicly condemned the Ethiopian government for suppressing these civil liberties. According to Human Rights Watch, the Prime Minister's party even had "total control of local and district administrations to monitor and intimidate individuals at a household level." This tight grip on freedom yielded a culture of fear in Ethiopia. Most would not dare take the risk of serving lengthy prison sentences by speaking out against the government.

Zenawi's tyrannical behavior during the 2005 election perhaps best illustrates the Prime Minister's iron fist.

What was promised to be a fair election came under heavy criticism, and when

accusations of electoral fraud first surfaced, the Prime Minister nervously declared a state of emergency in which he outlawed public gatherings and drew special forces from elite military units to intimidate civilians. When the official results of the election claimed victory for the Prime Minister, ensuing demonstrations were quickly and violently dismantled. Nearly 200 people, many of them college students, were killed as a result of the government crackdown.



Despite Zenawi's reputation of forcibly silencing dissent, his positive contributions to Ethiopia must not be overlooked. Zenawi's personal commitment to developing Ethiopia—a nation on which the international community had once given up—was the primary force behind Ethiopia's economic boom. One of the biggest developments that Zenawi instituted was the Ethiopian Commodity Exchange (ECX), a multi-commodity exchange program intended to achieve market efficiency in the agricultural sector. Created almost four years ago, the ECX has quickly become the most sophisticated commodity exchange in all of Africa. Since its implementation, Ethiopia's agricultural system has experienced unparalleled success. Overall agricultural output has dramatically increased and several new promising sectors, such as floriculture, have arisen as a result.

Prime Minister Zenawi is also responsible for Ethiopia's infrastructural transformation

over the past decade. In two decades, the percentage of Ethiopia covered by roads has doubled. The growing construction sector has experienced 10 percent annual growth and has created a multitude of jobs and business opportunities in the nation. Moreover, Zenawi's emphasis on developing infrastructure has increased Ethiopia's overall standard of living. Affordable housing for low and middle income Ethiopians is increasingly available, and the number of government health centers has also grown. There will be 3,153 government health centers by the end of 2012 compared to the mere 630 that were available just three years ago. Because Ethiopia has only experienced this type of sustained economic growth under the leadership of Zenawi, many Ethiopians are fearful of a future without his rule.

Ethiopia is not the only nation concerned about the loss of the Prime Minister; the rest of the international community, primarily the U.S., share similar sentiments. Prime Minister Zenawi was a key ally in the War on Terrorism and a valuable partner to the United States. Under Zenawi's administration, Ethiopian troops worked with U.S. militia to combat prevalent Islamic militant groups in the Horn of Africa. These terrorist networks, the largest being Al-Shabaab, continue to pose a serious threat to United States national security.

Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's death translates to a myriad of uncertainties both for Ethiopia and the international community. His legacy, mixed with reflections on both rapid economic growth and a notoriety for corruption, is similarly ambiguous. However, Zenawi's death might signify a newfound opportunity for Ethiopia, a chance to experience an era of leadership defined by true democratic ideals, one that can finally exercise its civil liberties, one devoid of corruption. Conversely, the absence of Prime Minister Zenawi may challenge the trend of economic growth in Ethiopia. Depending on the policies of the next administration and the newly inaugurated Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, it is uncertain whether the economy will continue to grow at the same rate, if at all.



the rationality of ignorance. on local politics in the shadow of national elections

Patrick Wheat
Associate Editor

“Every two years we get to overthrow the U. S. Government,” a popular phrase overheard as November approaches. This, for all intents and purposes, is a true statement. Every two years, a total of 468 seats from the House of Representatives and the Senate are reelected, and then every four years we elect the President.

While quantifiably the most participated-in political event, the presidential election represents only a fraction of what happens on those special Tuesdays in November. In every state across the nation, thousands of elections are held for smaller offices affecting a relatively tiny area of the nation, but on a daily and more personal basis. In 2008, 131,257,328 people voted in the presidential primary. Of those who voted, 129 million voted for Barack Obama or John McCain, making every individual vote account for .0000000007% of the total vote. In Athens-Clarke County, Obama received 29,000 votes, easily winning the area by more than 10,000 votes. Comparatively, State Representative Bob Smith ran unopposed and won District 113 (part of the Athens-Clarke area) with only 4,649 votes. Knowing that local government policy affects communities more profoundly, why do politically active individuals continue to ignore local elections?

Perhaps voters are unaware that these elections are happening. This year the presidential race officially began January 3, eleven months before the November general election. Some candidates kickstart

their campaigns as early as two years prior to the election. This long campaign period is ultimately attributed to citizens' needing time to learn about the men and women gunning for that spot in the Oval Office. What is the filing deadline for State Representative for District 113? May 23 through May 25. If two candidates apply for the same position from the same party, they participate in a primary occurring on July 31. If the seat is contested, the candidates campaign until the general election on November 6. This process, at its longest point, is one-fourth the length of a presidential campaign. Not to mention, state representative hopefuls are not bombarded by paparazzi and media coverage, like presidential candidates are. The public has to actively seek out information about local elections, whereas the passive absorption of national election data is a consequence of being a breathing member of society.

This observation is nothing new. In 1957, Anthony Downs published his “Economic Theory of Political Activity,” in which he examines political actions from an economic perspective. More precisely, he hypothesizes the costs and benefits of being informed and participating in the political system. Downs argues that for the average citizen, there is little incentive to become politically informed due to the unlikelihood of an individual influencing the outcome of an election. Additionally, the cost of voting “correctly” (based on individual preferences) is comparatively high, because there are innumerable issues and opinions to sift through. The return of an informed choice is practically zero because of the inability to impact the

results, thus the rational, not apathetic, action is ignorance. The natural lack of incentive to get involved is exacerbated by the fact that national races receive so much more media attention than local races. In the context of this year's election, we receive much more information about President Barack Obama's foreign policy than Spencer Frye's (a District 118 State Representative candidate) plans to ensure water conservation in Athens-Clarke County.

With so much media attention focused on races for office in Washington, it is sometimes easy to forget the accomplishments of local government. In Georgia, the state Legislature as drafted such programs as the HOPE scholarship, passed initiatives to lower tax rates on businesses who operate in Georgia, created plans to increase funding to allow for more advanced technology to be used in schools and worked to increase traffic safety through Operation Zero-Tolerance. State and local governments have more impact on the day-to-day lives of citizens compared to national policies.

The democratic process exists to allow every citizen to contribute to the political process. Reelection is an opportunity for the community to appraise its officials. Are they doing their jobs? If not, citizens hold the power, and the responsibility, to replace them. So, when November rolls around, make an informed choice on all the candidates for office, not just our president. If you want to help “overthrow the government” this year, help make it the local government we deserve.



Ronnie Kurtz and Tucker Green
*Associate Senior Editor of Politics and
 Managing Editor*

American professional sports have long been troubled with neutralizing perceived inequities amongst teams, with limited success. After all, closing the resource gap between a team in the New York City market and one in Kansas City is no small task. The NBA, NFL, and NHL have all responded to this issue by instituting a salary cap, limiting spending to a finite number. The MLB, on the other hand, has responded to its natural inequity with an institutional inequity of its own.

Established in 2003, Major League Baseball's competitive balance tax (CBT) acts as a kind of luxury tax with the purpose of discouraging uneven payrolls. The CBT, codified in the collective bargaining agreement between MLB owners and the players union, sets a payroll tax threshold of \$178 million for 2012 and 2013 before climbing to \$189 million for 2014.

Calculating teams' payrolls in accordance with this threshold is a complicated process. The bulk of payroll expenses comes from the average annual value (AAV) of every contract on teams' 40-man rosters. (AAV accounts for all money guaranteed to a

player on a contract, including buyout options, to more accurately represent that player's cost to the team). But the CBT threshold also considers health and pension benefits, insurance, workman's compensation, payroll and unemployment taxes, meal and tip money, All-Star game expenses, and college scholarships. Teams do not calculate final numbers until the end of the season in order to allot for potential changes in payroll stemming from mid-season trades.

The CBT acts as a balancing force in the unequal landscape of MLB by levying punitive measures against those that spend more than the established threshold. The punitive tax is on dollars over the threshold, not the entire payroll. Additionally, teams are punished at higher rates for repeat offenses. In 2012, first-time offenders paid a penalty of 20% of the amount they exceed the payroll threshold; second-time offenders paid 30%, and third-time or more offenders pay 42.5%. In 2013, those rates will rise to 17.5%, 30%, and 40%, respectively, while a new penalty of 50% will be levied on fourth-time or more offenders.

Unlike other professional sports organizations, namely the National Basketball Association, MLB does not use the tax revenue for revenue sharing. The first \$5 million collected is held in reserve to pay

for potential luxury tax refunds at the end of the year. After any potential refunds are issued, the balance is contributed to the Industry Growth Fund (IGF). The IGF, managed by a seven-member board of directors, seeks to benefit MLB overall by promoting the brand and enhancing fan participation and interest. Of the remaining money collected by the CBT, 50% funds player benefits, 25% is used to develop baseball in countries without high school baseball, and 25% more goes to the IGF.

The impact of the CBT on competitive balance in the MLB is difficult to distinguish, if at all. For one, the tax has not succeeded in closing the gap between the elite and the bourgeoisie. In 2003, the New York Yankees' Major League-leading opening day payroll exceeded that of the team with the lowest payroll, the Tampa Bay Devil Rays, by over \$133 million; in 2012, the still leading Yankees outspent the Oakland Athletics by \$148 million. It should also be noted that, in 2003, the Devil Rays were somewhat of an outlier, underspending the next closest team by \$21 million. In 2012, 7 teams spent within \$21 million of the A's. Thus, not only has the spending gap between the highest and lowest spending teams increased during the life of the luxury tax, it appears that teams at the lower end of the spectrum

“THE PROBLEM WITH THE LUXURY TAX IS THAT IT DOES NOT ADDRESS THE TIERED SYSTEM THAT HAS COME TO DOMINATE BASEBALL. TEAMS IN THE TOP TIER HAVE PROVEN THAT THEY HOLD NO QUALMS IN PAYING THE TAX, WHILE TEAMS IN THE BOTTOM TIER HAVE BECOME MORE OR LESS RESIGNED TO THEIR POSITION.”

have actually begun to spend relatively less money, certainly not altering the competitive balance in a positive manner.

Second, the luxury tax appears to have done little to deter big spending teams from continuing to spend. The Yankees have continuously led the league in payroll since 1999 and are the only team to pay the luxury tax every year since its inception; they have accounted for 95% of all CBT payments. While the Yankees have been the only consistent payer into the luxury tax system, teams in large markets such as the Boston Red Sox, Detroit Tigers, and Los Angeles Angels have shown a willingness to exceed the limit at various times. Teams in these large markets generate much larger profits than their counterparts in places such as Tampa and Kansas City, making it much easier for them to offset the price of big time players. Take, for example, the Los Angeles Dodgers. The team is expected to sign a television contract this offseason that could yield the owners over \$8 billion; the team thus had no problem absorbing over \$250 million in contracts to be paid out over the next six to eight years in a trade with the Boston Red Sox. There are now four players on the Dodgers that make more than \$20 million annually, the threshold for a “superstar” player, with one of their pitchers slated to sign a similarly

sized contract next year. It is apparent, then, that the luxury tax has done little to deter teams that have the capacity to exceed it from doing so.

Third, there is little reason to believe that the luxury tax is even necessary in maintaining competitive balance. In the nine years since the luxury tax has been implemented, the Yankees have only won one World Series and appeared in only two. In 2003, the Florida Marlins won the World Series with the sixth lowest payroll in baseball, while in 2008, the Tampa Bay Rays lost the championship series with the second lowest. Recent Academy Award Nominee Moneyball details the exhaustive efforts and successes of the Oakland Athletics attempts to win on a budget. In fact, those same A’s with the lowest payroll in baseball just beat out the Texas Rangers, with the sixth highest payroll in the league, for the AL West Crown. While big spending in baseball does seem to correlate with consistent contention for the playoffs, it does not ensure on field success.

The problem with the luxury tax is that it does not address the tiered system that has come to dominate baseball. Teams in the top tier have proven that they hold no qualms in paying the tax, while teams in the bottom tier have become more or less resigned to their position. The teams

that truly get penalized are those in the middle, such as the Philadelphia Phillies. These teams have the resources to spend up to or slightly above the luxury tax cap, but are unable to pay the taxes associated with exceeding that level. Instead of vying for superstar players, these teams find themselves routinely dumping the superstar players they already have onto teams in the upper tier, bettering their competitors while setting themselves back in the process.

The payroll gap in baseball is a circular phenomena. Teams need money to attract big time players, but need big time players to make money. The luxury tax has created a class warfare-ism in baseball, creating a system of have’s and have not’s. While it is not clear whether or not the industry has suffered from this policy, it certainly has not benefitted. Perhaps a reexamination of this policy is in order, less baseball slowly lose the parity that makes it great. There is a reason the NFL is the most watched sports league in the US while the NBA struggles to maintain ratings. In the NFL, any team can win on “any given Sunday;” in the NBA, the question has become “who will win it all this year, Kobe’s team or LeBron’s?” The MLB would be best suited to try and fit the NFL’s example.

IN *Local* — GOVERNMENT WE TRUST

on parks, recreation, and
our evolving expectations
of municipal government



Cody Knapp
Senior Editor

Americans have always been infamously ambivalent about their government. This seems logical; in fact, one of the things that sets the United States apart from other nations is that it was founded through a violent revolution against the most powerful government in the world at the time. This historic ambivalence stems from our seemingly inherent distrust of government and its employees, the bureaucrats. Anti-government sentiments, best summarized by right-wing icon Ronald Reagan's statement that "government isn't the solution, it's the problem," have formed the basis for a significant portion of American political philosophy since the Revolution. As the U.S. government has grown at all levels over the last half century, American's trust in it has declined at a worrisome rate. Government entities routinely receive abysmal approval ratings from their constituents, polls reveal that well over two-thirds of Americans believe that the government wastes tax dollars, and many politicians are able to make careers running against the record of

the very government they lead.

In this time of extreme skepticism about government's ability to effectively and efficiently address the needs of its constituents, American anti-governance extends well beyond the railings of politicians of all stripes against the inefficiencies and failings of government; it trickles down and gains expression and endorsement even through popular culture. Perhaps the best example of this expression can be found in the beloved character of Ron Swanson from the hit series *Parks & Recreation*.

On Thursday nights, millions of Americans tune into NBC to revel in the humor of this delightful mockumentary that follows the lives and actions of a fictional collection of local government bureaucrats. Ron Swanson is the show's deadpan, government-hating director of the Pawnee City Department of Parks and Recreation, a man's man who is constantly stating his belief that government is a complete waste of taxpayer money. In fact, his idea of the perfect government is "one guy who sits in a small room at a desk, and the only thing he's allowed to decide is who to nuke." In one of his more memorable moments, Ron

Swanson finds himself in a teaching moment when a young girl asks him to help her on a school paper with the prompt "Why Government Matters." His immediate reaction:

"It's never too early to learn that the government is a greedy piglet that suckles on a taxpayer's teat until they have sore, chapped nipples. I'm gonna need a different metaphor to give this nine year old."

The more appropriate metaphor that Ron finally selects involves him eating the girl's lunch and giving her nothing in return, thus exhibiting the injustice of government taxation. Through hyperbole, Ron demonstrates the average American's sneaking suspicion that any time government works, he or she pays a price.

In *Parks and Recreation*, Ron's anti-government stance is juxtaposed with the good-government optimism of Leslie Knope, the deputy director of the Department of Parks and Recreation. Ideologically, Leslie is Ron's polar opposite; she is a dedicated bureaucrat who firmly believes in the worth of all public projects. She works tirelessly to provide quality public goods to the people of Pawnee, maximizing com-



Leslie Knope, third from left, is a dedicated bureaucrat that works tirelessly to counteract the small-government approach favored by her boss Ron Swanson, third from right. *Photo/NBCUniversal*

munal benefits as much as possible with the limited budgetary resources available. Her intensity and naïveté drive the show's plot, as she pursues increasingly daunting projects each season.

During season 2 of *Parks and Recreation*, the Pawnee city government finds itself in a debt crisis. When Ben Wyatt, an Indiana state government auditor, arrives to "gut [the budget] with a machete," Leslie reminds him that the potential cuts have consequences for "real people in a real town, working in a real building with real feelings." Ben responds by asking if the building Leslie works in has feelings. Leslie responds by saying that "There's a lot of history in this one. Maybe it does." When the budget task force decides that Leslie should be one of the victims of government downsizing, it is the vehemently libertarian Ron who steps in to defend her, saving her position and, by extension, the Parks and Recreation Department.

The most important aspect of the show is not the cooperation and friendship between Ron and Leslie despite their enormous differences, nor is it the battle over budgetary priorities we can easily observe

on the surface. In reality, ideological differences do cause fundamental clashes over priorities and tough choices must be made, with some programs being cut or losing primacy. The show's deeper message can be found in what Leslie consistently articulates about government through her determination and firm belief in the government's ability to provide valuable public goods.

American government is not merely a coercive entity, a Hobbesian leviathan that arbitrarily imposes an ordered system on its citizens in an effort to maintain its power and guarantee private property rights. In a democracy, such as the U.S., government also represents the collective will and priorities of its constituents, best understood as the sum total of our wishes and desires. By extension, government's institutions and initiatives become figurative incubators and amplifiers for the collective goodwill of their employees. It is the shared drive of front-line bureaucrats to provide quality outcomes to their constituents that represents the true power and potential impact of government.

People matter. This is the message at the heart of *Parks and Recreation*. It's also the

message that is most often missing in public discourses on the role of government. Conservatives intent on tearing government down and liberals intent on expanding services consistently ignore the role that motivation and sincerity at the ground level play in the implementation of legislative and policy priorities.

To counteract this, our emphasis as a society should not be solely on political ideology or fiscal stringency; it should be on the cultivation of a concept of civic responsibility and ethics among the citizenry. Thereby, we will encourage the Leslie Knope's of the world to join the bureaucracy and seek to make a difference not through politics, but through administration, thus bringing a more tangible collective morality to government actions and government reform. While government is certainly not a cure-all for the ills of the modern era, it is necessary. After all, it offers the greatest potential for collective action, and just a few Leslie Knope's can help maximize the benefits for us all.

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